

Kensuke Koike & Thomas Sauvin: No Cut Left to Chance

By Brad Feuerhelm on December 14, 2017



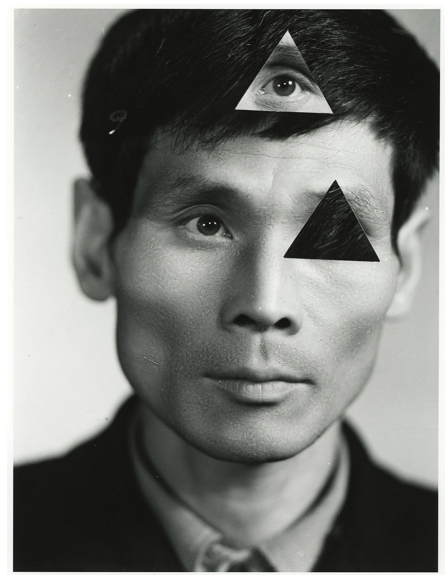
"So, when you look at these images, you have to understand the basic principal of the work, but also a sort of mythical sacred geometric ability to render the form within an existing image of that which has been removed with an exactitude of skill much above that which most people are able."

Precision cutting is an ability best left to mathematical minds. It requires a steady hand; a steady eye and demeanour unfit for those who believe in serendipity as a way of life. The hands that guide the minute impressions of the blade to paper work their way through the geometry of the printed image, slowly and with great mental architecture and meditation excise pieces of paper like teeth from the gums- ever so careful not to leave root traces on the edge of the paper it removes, nor the paper it leaves behind. What strikes the mind that is unable to fathom the precise cut is that the overall effort is but just one piece of the puzzle to be fabricated. These are cuts that become new weaves of a psychological cartographic delineation-each removal is a piece of territory to overlap with acuity of another terrain.

The gentle hands of Kensuke Koike are ones that I would like to examine. I would like to know if he shakes, if he drinks coffee or imbibes any such stimulant while making these incredible collages. He has one rule for making his work. Nothing can be removed and nothing can be added to the piece he works on. This means that in this optical effrontery it is mathematically observed well in advance of any cuts- as to cut wrong would mean that the next piece will not fit the portion removed and vice versa. This cool and calculating position presents any number of potential problems or errors once the blade

begins to etch the surface of an image. So, when you look at these images, you have to understand the basic principal of the work, but also a mythical sacred geometric ability to render the form within an existing image of that which has been removed with an exactitude of skill much above that which most people are able.

"In a strange way, this openness to work with others is unnecessary for Sauvin, who could certainly have made work from the ephemeral material himself. What is important is that he recognized its potential in the hands of Koike and that he took the steps to de-limit his own ego to encourage the collaboration..."



The images that Koike is working from for this particular project are from none other than Thomas Sauvin, known explicitly for his own archival work as an artist. His "Beijing Silvermine" needs little introduction. The collaboration with Koike has been produced from an archive of material that Thomas has found or salvaged from the open market of the material Chinese image economy. The album of original material, negatives and ephemera are from the 1980s and were made by a Shanghai University photography student. The original album itself is loaded with spectacular images and its Sauvin's keen eye for image acquisition that also makes the project of "No More, No Less" a critical investigation between a three-party collaboration with two parties working between archive and precision technical skill.

Sauvin's work is also of note here and it is not to diminish Koike's exemplary gift. He has used his trained sets of skills to not only source incredible material, but has also been able to see its potential in collaborative form with Koike. It is not the first time that he has worked with others, nor will it be his last. In a strange way, this openness to work with others is unnecessary for Sauvin, who could certainly

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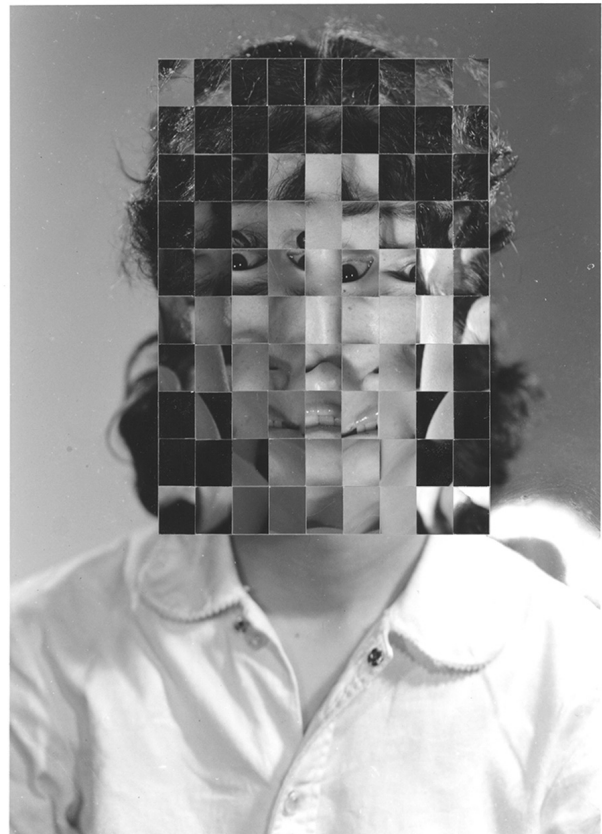
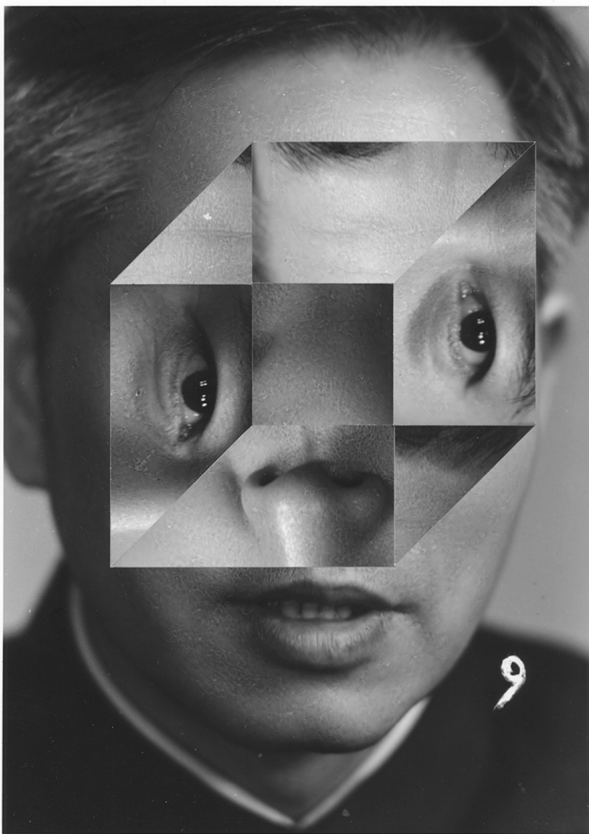
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have made work from the ephemeral material himself. What is important is that he recognized its potential in the hands of Koike and that he took the steps to de-limit his own ego to encourage the collaboration that Koike finished with astonishing result. I am still in awe over the process from beginning to end of this project of both parties, let alone the supreme technical skill and imagination for preparedness that Koike exhibits. It is beyond my own ability to think with this precision preferring not just the scalpel to the sword, but rather the avoidance that most people working in collage exhibit fumbling with a sledgehammer. In my estimation, this is one of the most fluid and well-executed collaborations that I have seen with archival material or in general over the past few years. It reminds me that there still exists new forms to investigate between minds and new images to raise the bar of skill as a result.



Kensuke Koike & Thomas Sauvin

"No More, No Less"

Guangdong Museum of Art Photography Triennial
Opening December 15th

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